

New railroad brought people instead of economic growth

By Donna MacLearn
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DUXBURY — The railroad never brought the economic development some residents had hoped for, but it did bring an influx of summer people who helped develop the town.

At first, Duxbury showed little interest in the railroad, E. Waldo Long wrote in his book *The Story of Duxbury 1637-1937*. It had stage-coach lines to Boston and Kingston and connections by ship to other ports.

In 1845, Kingston was added to the train route from Boston. The next year, a small group of Duxbury residents received a charter to build the South Shore Railroad from Braintree to Duxbury via Cohasset, Scituate and Marshfield.

But the line was only brought as far as Cohasset. By 1847, another group had received a charter to build the Duxbury Branch Railroad north from Kingston, but the plans were abandoned for a lack of support.

Support for a railroad grew as shipping declined. In 1861 and 1866, two companies formed to build a horse-car line between Duxbury and Kingston, but the operation proved unsatisfactory, Long said.

In 1867, a group received a charter to build the Duxbury and Cohasset Railroad to South Duxbury. Scituate, Marshfield and Duxbury each agreed to pay \$75,000 and ground was broken Dec. 17, 1870.

On June 15, 1871, the railroad began service to Greenbush in North Scituate, and two months later, the remaining 17 miles of track to South Duxbury opened. But the hasty construction left parts of the roadbed unstable.

"At one point where the roadbed had sagged, the guests were requested to leave the train and to walk along the right of way until the train could

again pick them up when it reached more solid ground," Long wrote of the train's first trip.

Although the town's \$75,000 investment never paid dividends, "indirectly, the town profited, not by attracting manufacturing interests as had been hoped, but by opening Duxbury to summer residents," Long said. "The summer people have added much to the taxable property of the town, have contributed generously to the town's civic and charitable enterprises and have given wide publicity to its advantages."

As of 1937, the railroad operated as the Old Colony branch of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railway Co. In *The Duxbury Book 1637-1987*, Margery MacMillan wrote that summer people took the Old Colony from Boston and stayed for a week, month or the season.

"Out on Standish Shore, which was sparsely inhabited, the Duxbury Shore Company, realizing the area's great potential as a summer resort, built a small hotel, the Myles Standish House, off what is now Marshall Street," she said. "It became so popular two wings were added and every amenity was considered for the elite from Boston and New York."

The private Powder Point School opened its rooms to guests during summer vacation, and inns and boarding houses opened up along Washington Street, she wrote.

The attractions were the beach and bay, the unhurried pace of life, swimming, sailing, tennis, and social activities at the hotels and yacht clubs.

"The railroad seemed so important to Duxbury life that an outcry arose on notice of its abandonment in 1939," Robert E. Merry wrote in *The Duxbury Book 1637-1987*. Service ended June 24, 1939. The tracks were torn up after World War II.